

THE TEACHING OF CARL KETCHERSIDE AGAIN

An editorial by Reuel Lemmons, in Firm Foundation, August 27, 1963 p. 545

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This paper has carried several critical reviews of what we believe to be the false teaching and extremely liberal views of Carl Ketcherside. Brother Ketcherside requested space in these pages to present his views, but when he did not comply with our request that he face up to the issue and answer the objections offered in these pages, we did not run his articles. He then ran them in a special issue of his own paper. The Firm Foundation carried our reply in the issues of June 4, 11 and 18.

Immediately upon the appearance of our article of June 4 Brother Ketcherside wrote a reply, and promised to notice the other articles as they appeared. The second article listed 12 points at which we believe Brother Ketcherside to teach contrary to the Scriptures. This article he ignored. Then he sent a reply to article three. We immediately wrote him that we had not received a reply to the second article, which is the heart and core of his dangerous and unscriptural teaching. We promised when we received this reply we would print his articles and our reply. We have now received it. Elsewhere in this paper appears the first of five. The others will follow.

In his letter accompanying the first reply Brother K. avows over and over that he is "facing up to" the charges made against his position. But the reader will please re-read the editorial of June 4, then Brother K's reply and see for himself whether Brother K. faces up to the issues. It will be noticed that his entire reply is directed at a few minor points in the editorial that might be considered "personal." It is hard to separate a man from his teaching, and to attack the teaching without attacking the teacher. We freely admit it.

In the first paragraph of his article you will notice that he says we assign two reasons for not printing his articles: (1) they were not relevant to the objections made against his positions; (2) his attitude in his writing differs from that in his unity meetings. The reader will surely notice that he has kept off the first and centered all his attention on the second. This was also his course in his four original articles, and this is the reason we did not run them. This sets a pattern that you will find characteristic of his present articles. If it were granted that every personal jab made was an error, this would not affect in the least the falseness of this man's teaching and its danger for the brotherhood.

After making his entire defense against personal remarks he turns to do what he condemns us for doing, and says, "Brother Lemmons is still enraptured with the myth that only those who subscribe to the interpretations on controversial issues set forth in the Firm Foundation, constitute the one body." Brother Lemmons was never enraptured by such a myth; doesn't believe it and never did. This is typical of K's attempts to get away from facing up to the false teachings enumerated in the June 11 issue of the FF: for illustrations (1) his teaching that baptism is no part of the gospel, nor of doctrine either and (2) all believers—unbaptized and sprinkled alike are "sons of God and my brothers in prospect."

We have no desire to inject personalities into this discussion, but we do plan to insist that Brother K answer the doctrinal issues. If his position is doctrinally sound we can all profit from it; if it is doctrinally unsound an exposure of that unsoundness may save souls from hell. Doctrinal soundness is the only thing that matters. Brother K, what about the "sincere sprinkled"? Are they in the kingdom? Since baptism is no part of the gospel, will the gospel put them in the kingdom, or does it take something more? Will they be lost? Do people become sons of God at the point of faith, or only after having been baptized into Christ?

The brother says that it is not true that he "denies that there is, or can be, any

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visible manifestation of the Lord's church." Brother K, if this be the truth, then is a sincere sprinkled Methodist part of that visible church? Remember that you said "he is born of God and is my brother in prospect."

Doctrinal barriers are not artificial barriers. None would object to any legitimate effort toward unity. Every good thing said or done to this end is commendable. But doing violence to the Bible teaching regarding the essentials of unity is not a good thing. K's position is that any barrier to fellowship is an "artificial barrier erected by men to keep them separated and segregated from each other." This we cannot accept because the Bible does not teach it. Paul said, "Now we commend (sic) you, brethren in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us" (2 Thess. 3:6). Ketcherside says, "Wherever my father has a child, I have a brother," and you have no right to withdraw yourselves from any brother who walks disorderly (unless he denies the deity of Jesus). It is evident that one who accepts Paul's teaching cannot accept Ketcherside's teaching. And it is just as plain that one who accepts Ketcherside's teaching must reject Paul's teaching.

Note carefully the quibble about its being the party spirit rather than differences, that creates factions. The play is on the word "faction." Let us use instead the word "division." It is agreed by all that the party spirit can create a faction, but we deny that this is the only thing that can create division. Brother Ketcherside's teaching is that doctrine can never be a ground for division. Yet, John was commanded to write to the church in Pergamos, that the Lord held against them the fact that some of them "hold the doctrine of Balaam" (Rev. 2:14), and . . . "so hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate" (Rev. 2:15). Brother Ketcherside is advocating that brethren refuse to break fellowship with those who hold doctrines the Lord hates.

If, as Ketcherside teaches, brethren cannot divide over doctrine, then large portions of the divine record must be rejected as not possessing essential divine authority. Since government of the church, the Lord's supper, or the importance of the assembly all come in the realm of doctrine, then "no matter how you slice it" the church is not to break fellowship over these things. We cannot accept such teaching. We are perfectly willing for dialogue and discussion, but we are not willing to compromise.